



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday



October 19, 2012

Career and Technical Education in Kentucky

On October 16, pursuant to an [executive order](#) issued by Governor Steve Beshear, the Office of Career and Technical Education was merged with the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE's) Carl Perkins branch to form the KDE Office of Career and Technical Education (CTE). Associate Commissioner Dale Winkler will head this new office. I am personally very excited about the potential to elevate and integrate career and technical education within the department.

Why is this so important to education and the economy in Kentucky? Here is one example.

Governor Beshear recently [proclaimed](#) October 5 as Manufacturing Day in Kentucky. The [National Association of Manufacturers](#), the [Manufacturing Institute](#), [Kentucky Association of Manufacturers](#) and the Foundation for Kentucky Industry have designated the day as a launch point to emphasize the many values of manufacturing.

Governor Beshear stated that "manufacturing is a wonderful career path for highly skilled workers within a crucial sector of the economy. The manufacturing community is a key economic driver in the Commonwealth, representing \$27 billion, or 17 percent, of Kentucky's GDP, with more than 215,000 people working in manufacturing in Kentucky."

This week, I had the opportunity to tour an exciting program that is focused on manufacturing. I visited the Toyota Advanced Manufacturing Technician Program (AMT) at the [Toyota Georgetown](#) manufacturing plant. The AMT program has become a national model of how business can collaborate with education to create bright futures for students. In collaboration with numerous school districts in the region, [Bluegrass Community and Technical College](#) and other local businesses, students are offered a two-year intensive program that combines the technical, work and academic skills to prepare students for manufacturing jobs.

Of interest to me was the statement that over 600,000 manufacturing job openings are available in the U.S., and industry is having a hard time finding workers with the technical skills and work skills to fill these jobs that pay a living wage. What great news for students in this program and other similar programs across the U.S. It also was exciting to hear that there is significant interest to expand this type of program in Kentucky.

In talking with the students and instructors, I heard several suggestions for the new Office of Career and Technical Education. Among these suggestions was the expansion of our [Project Lead the Way](#) program, integration of more rigorous academic skills in career and technical courses, focusing instruction on projects and application of academic and technical skills in an integrated fashion, allowing communities to focus on specific job sector courses rather than one-size-fits-all courses, and heavily involving business and industry in career and technical programs.

Kentucky has focused on elevating and integrating career and technical education. Our [Unbridled Learning](#) accountability model gives equal weighting to college and career readiness with bonus points for students who graduate with both. Jobs are available for students who graduate with career and technical skills, as evidenced by the number of job openings in manufacturing.

Over the next few years, I hope our CTE program -- through the integration of academic and career/technical -- will provide numerous opportunities across the state that are similar to the Toyota Advanced Manufacturing Program.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.